DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 276 118 EA 018 955

AUTHOR Sistrunk, Walter E.
TITLE Issues Impacting on Departments of Educational Administration: Some Possible Responses.
PUB DATE Aug 86
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration (40th, Flagstaff, AZ, August 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Standards; *Aging in Academia; *College Faculty; *Educational Administration; Educational Change; *Enrollment Trends; *Faculty Publishing; Financial Problems; Higher Education; *Public Support; Publish or Perish Issue; Retrenchment

ABSTRACT

Colleges and universities are as vulnerable to change and public scrutiny as public schools. Many are experiencing hostile legislatures, meddling board members, loss of public confidence, reduced budgets, program changes, and alumni criticism. Colleges of education have responded to public scorn with massive program reforms; educational administration departments are eager to follow suit. This paper summarizes several issues facing educational administration departments and outlines some possible responses. An aging professoriate with few prospective high-quality replacements is one such issue. The solution might be providing onsite training for both school administrators and researcher-writers, since neither group usually possesses the other's skills and experience. The problem of declining enrollments (exacerbated by remanding recertification to local school districts or state boards of education) has no solution except school closure unless demand increases. To restore public confidence and adequate funding will require extensive curricular reform, outside funding sources, retrenchment, and other draconian measures. For "pro-active" board members and legislators the presenter suggests education courses in advisory behavior. To handle the most worrisome problem, practitioner criticism, will demand that departments of education administration listen to the criticism, find out what is causing the critical behavior, and find ways to seem relevant to practitioners. (MLH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED276118

ISSUES IMPACTING ON DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION: SOME POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Presented by
Dr. Walter E. Sistrunk
Professor Of Educational Leadership
Mississippi State University

At
The Fortieth Annual Conference Of
The National Conference of Professors Of
Educational Administration
At
Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff Arizona
August 1986

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Walter E. Sistrunk

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 018 955

ISSUES IMPACTING ON DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION: SOME POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Presented by
Dr. Walter E. Sistrunk
Professor Of Educational Leadership
Mississippi State University

At
The Fortieth Annual Conference Of
The National Conference of Professors Of
Educational Administration
At
Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff Arizona
August 1986

This is a time of kaleidoscopic, mind boggling, change. Schooling in general is under fire from every aspect of the general public. No part of the system is escaping criticism, change, and "reform". Higher education is no exception. Colleges and universities are experiencing hostile legislatures, pro-active board members, loss of public confidence, program changes, reduced budgets and criticism from the alumni no less than public schools. Colleges of Education are targets of public scorn and they are responding with massive programmatic changes. Departments of Educational Administration are perhaps more vulnerable to some of these criticisms and changes than some other college of education units because of the traditionally small number of credit hours produced by such departments. Generally, then, educational administration departments are at least as vulnerable to the hue and cry for reform as any unit in higher education; and, they often have another situation that creates still more potential problems. That situation is the aging professorate and the typical available

replacement. The rest of this presentation is devoted to seven issues which seem to impact on most departments of educational administration and some possible responses to each of them.

The Maturing Professorate in Educational Administration

Walter Sistrunk and Jerry Rasmussen did a survey of the professorate in the U.S. and Canada in 1983 to determine the interest in and typical practices of self-renewal. About 800 professors were surveyed. The results of their study were presented at NCPEA in 1983 and a revised version was presented in 1984. Sistrunk and Rasmussen found that most professors of Edadmin were either associate or full professors, most had been at their present institution 15 or more years and most were over 55 years of age in 1983. These data indicated a very stable professorial population but one that is growing near retirement in large numbers. There has been a sharp increase in the number of advertisements in the Chronicle, and elsewhere, for entry level professors of educational administration in 1985-86. This seems to indicate a rise in the number of retirements.

This situation seems to indicate that what has been a rather stable population for 15-20 years is about to change very rapidly. If this was occurring during a time of stability in higher education and if the potential supply of replacements was similar in training and experience to those whom they will replace it might not be

a problem. Such is not the case. Higher education is under great external pressure. There is turmoil and ferment throughout the halls of Academe. Furthermore, many of the potential replacements are short on experience as public school administrators and many others are short on experience as researchers and writers. It is the writer's observation that few are both experienced public school administrators and experienced researchers and writers. Effective professors of educational administration must be able to relate well to practitioners and they can't if they haven't been one. Effective professors must also be able to get promoted which means publish (whether we like it or not).

There seem to be two basic approaches to solving this problem. One is to reduce the demand for new Edadmin professors by freezing positions, closing small departments, or terminating programs. The other is to increase the supply of potential replacements by providing systems where competent researchers and writers can get some public school administrative experience or by providing systems where practicing public school administrators can learn more about writing, research, and publishing. All of these approaches are being tried but usually not in an orderly way. Unless we solve this problem our programs are going to have even less credibility with practitioners than they now have and our

departments will have even less respect on the campus than they now have.

Declining Enrollments

Enrollment in graduate programs in educational administration has been declining at many institutions for more than a decade. This decline will become much more pronounced in those states where recertification has been given to the State Department of Education or to local school districts.

Some departments have tried to cope with declining enrollment by lowering standards. Some have tried to add programs for non-school personnel, some have reduced the number of faculty, etc. All of these measures seem to have fallen short of a long term solution. The only long term solutions to declining enrollment, unless demand increases, are either economic or political. An economic solution means let those schools survive which can and let the others die. A political solution means for boards of regents to close small or weak departments thus saving money and providing better programs.

Changing Certification/Recertification Requirements

Many states are changing, under the guise of educational reform, initial certification of principals, etc. to provisional certification. Many have, or are about to, change recertification by remanding it to state or local school district "staff development" programs rather than the traditional return to graduate school every five

to ten years. This will further impact on enrollment and thus on the need for professors of educational administration.

Many departments of educational administration did not see this coming and thus little effort was made to study the impact of changing certification requirements. Departments must become involved in the new certification/recertification requirements. Perhaps, departments need to become more political.

Loss of Public Confidence

Schooling generally has experienced a dramatic loss of public confidence over the last 15 years. For the most part, departments of Edadmin have escaped the most scathing denouncements. This will not continue. One of the reasons that practicing principals and superintendents are so critical of us is that they believe that any loss of confidence the general public has in public schools is because too much of our curriculum is irrelevant and redundant. Many believe we are teaching a saber-tooth curriculum.

Departments should act forthwith to restore confidence in the public schools and in the leadership of them which we, of course, trained.

Budget Crunches

High unemployment, the huge national debt, the negative balance of trade, the high rate of inflation, and the general public malaise have all combined to create

budgetary problems for nearly all state boards and for private colleges. There appear to be worsening budget problems ahead. Colleges of education are more vulnerable to budget cuts than some units because they have lost so much enrollment. Departments of Edadmin are more vulnerable to budget cuts than most COE units for the same reason.

Some solutions are: increase enrollment (how), increase outside funding (how), (Federal funding has almost dried up), reduce force, cancel programs, or combine them with others.

Pro-Active Board Members

One of the greatest changes occurring throughout education in this decade is the increasingly pro-active stance of board members and legislators. Time will not permit exploration of this topic in any depth. Suffice it to say that board members and legislators meddle continually with administrative matters. The only practical solution is education. Board members need to understand the meaning and purpose of separation of power between legislative and executive branches of government. Departments of Edadmin should work with school boards, boards of regents, etc. to provide short, non-credit courses dealing with these matters.

Criticism from Practicioners

All of the above are worrisome and difficult problems; but, the issue that cuts many of us the deepest

is the criticism leveled at us by practitioners. These are our alumni! Yet, they say we are irrelevant, that we live in Ivory Towers, that we are too theoretical, etc. These criticisms hurt! We feel we deserve better and some of us wonder if we had adhered to higher standards in the '60's and 70's if we would be experiencing such castigations.

We always told them that behavior is caused. So let us find out what is causing such critical behavior. In many cases, practitioners are critical of the institutions but not of the professors. Departments of Edadmin should find out why this occurs. Finally, the departments must listen to these criticisms and must find a way to seem relevant to practitioners.